DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 354 264 TM 019 543

AUTHOR Tarpley, Crystal L.; And Others
TITLE Factors Associated with Community College Selection of Mississippi Students Who Have Taken the Spring 1991 ACT Assessment.
PUB DATE Nov 92
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (21st, Knoxville, TN, November 11-13, 1992).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Aspiration; College Bound Students; *College Choice; College Entrance Examinations; *Community Colleges; Demography; High Schools; *High School Students; Interest Inventories; Multiple Choice Tests; Predictor Variables; Racial Differences; Scores; Sex Differences; *State Surveys; *Student Characteristics; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *ACT Assessment; *Mississippi

ABSTRACT

Factors that account for variance between groups of Mississippi students in their choice of college types were studied using data from the 1991 American College Testing (ACT) Program. The objectives of this study were to describe Mississippi students who plan to attend community or junior colleges and who took the spring 1991 ACT Assessment Program test according to gender, race, and ACT composite score; and to determine which ACT Assessment Program student profile factors, interest inventory factors, and demographic variables account for a statistically significant amount of variance between students who plan to attend community or junior colleges from students who plan to attend other colleges or universities. The study population included all 19,022 students who took the ACT in Mississippi in the spring of 1991. Responses from 177 of the student profile items and all responses from the interest inventory were used with demographic information. The outcome variable was the choice of community/junior college or other college. Community/junior college was the choice of 5,135 students (27 percent). Of these, about 39 percent were male, about 72 percent were Caucasian/White, about 23 percent were Afro-American/Black and about 4.5 percent were members of other racial and ethnic backgrounds. Those who selected community/junior college were generally lower achievers, although these students had taken more English and honors English courses, and were interested in staying close to home and in attending small colleges with lower tuitions. Many expected to attain a lower level of postsecondary education. Results are discussed in terms of recruiting students for community/junior colleges. One table presents the stepwise multiple regression of factors in the college choice. An 17-item list of references is included. (SLD)

ED354264

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH COMMUNITY COLLEGE SELECTION OF MISSISSIPPI STUDENTS WHO HAVE TAKEN THE SPRING 1991 ACT ASSESSMENT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
CRYSTAL TARPLEY
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Crystal L. Tarpley

East Mississippi Community College

Rudy S. Tarpley

Program of Research and Evaluation for Public Schools

Mississippi State University

Harold J. Morris

Department of Educational Leadership

Mississippi State University

Mid-South Educational Research Association Annual Meeting

November 11-13, 1992

Knoxville, Tennessee

TM019543

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

INTRODUCTION

"In recent years, there has been increased interest in and research related to students' decision making and college choices" (Smith, 1990, p. 109). Smith went on to study factors associated with college choice, especially those choices relating to community colleges. His study found differences between students attending community colleges and students attending other colleges and universities. One important difference was that older students wished to attend community colleges more than younger students. Chapman (1981) developed a model of college choice applicable to traditional college students. The model described two major influences to college choice; (a) the background and current characteristics of the student and student's family, and (b) a series of external influences.

Maxwell (1992) found that students who chose a community college did so based upon specific courses and other academic issues. Both Smith (1990) and Maxwell (1992) noted that proximity to the students' home was an important variable in college choice. Smith and Bers (1989) and Murphy (1980) asserted that parents play an important role in the college choice decisions of the children. Murphy also found that college choices are made by students at an early age, as early as grade school.

Other variables important when researching college choice are those dealing with nontraditional student populations. Cohen and Brawer (1982) stated that increased numbers in community

colleges could be due to: (a) older student participation; (b) physical accessibility; (c) financial aid; (d) part time attendance; (e) the reclassification of institutions; (f) the redefinition of students and courses; and (g) high attendance by low ability students, women, and minority students. The nontraditional student was also studied by Bers and Smith (1987). The researchers, in an attempt to discover ways to manage enrollments by studying college choice factors, qualitatively interviewed women and men in order to determine why they chose the college they attended. Another research study by Rountree and Lambert (1992) noted that women students are one of the fastest growing populations on today's campuses. The number of older females also continues to grow.

Willett (1989) wrote that typical two-year college students were from families that had a first-generation higher education background. The study was conducted on four Midwestern institutions and the researcher concluded that further study should concern the achievement of different types of students. Hughes and Graham (1992) found that the number of classes missed had a significant relationship on achievement.

The review of literature identifies many variables which separate community college students from other students. Further research is needed to validate present research and find additional variables in order to assist advisors and counselors in identifying factors which affect student college choice.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study was to identify factors which account for the variance between groups of Mississippi students based upon their choice of college type as taken from the Spring 1991 American College Testing (ACT) Assessment Program test information.

The specific objectives of this study were to:

1. Describe the Mississippi students who plan to attend community or junior colleges and who took the Spring 1991 ACT Assessment Program test according to gender, race, and ACT composite score.

2. Determine which ACT Assessment Program student profile factors, interest inventory factors, and demographic variables account for a statistically significant amount of variance between students who plan to attend community or junior colleges from students who plan to attend other colleges or universities.

PROCEDURE

The population for this study included all students who took the Spring 1991 ACT Assessment Program test in Mississippi (N = 19,022). The ACT Assessment Program booklet is a measurement instrument consisting of four areas: English, mathematics, reading, and science reasoning. The instrument offers multiple choice questions to assess candidates for college entrance. Additionally, the ACT Assessment Program surveys the test takers with an interest inventory and a student profile section. This study will use the responses from 177 of the

student profile section response items along with all responses from the interest inventory which are classified into six major interest categories.

The predictor variables were all responses to the student profile section, the six interest inventory classifications, and demographic information. All of the information used as predictor variables was completed as the students registered for the test. The outcome variable was the classification of college choice, either community/junior colleges or other colleges. Test takers could choose from six choices in the student profile section as to which type of college they preferred to attend. The types of colleges which were public or private community/junior colleges were re-computed to classify all students into two categories; (a) community/junior college students, and (b) other college students. Data analysis involved a stepwise multiple regression performed at the .01 level of significance. All statistical analyses were performed on SPSS release 4.0 for the Sun 4 mainframe on the campus of Mississippi State University.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

The ACT Assessment Program test booklet lists six choices in the student profile section as to which type of college the students preferred to attend. Of the 19,022 students who took the ACT Assessment test in Mississippi in Spring 1991, 5,135 (27.0%) selected one of the community/junior college choices. Of those students who chose community/junior colleges, 39.2% were

male and 60.8% were female. Additionally, 71.9% of the students who selected community/junior colleges were Caucasian-American/White, 22.8% were Afro-American/Black, 4.5% were members of other racial/ethnic backgrounds, and 0.8% did not respond to the question. Finally, the average ACT composite score of the students that selected a community/junior college was 16.94.

The second research objective sought to determine which of the 177 ACT student profile section factors, 6 interest inventory factors, and demographic variables accounted for a statistically significant amount of variance between community college students and other students. At the .01 alpha level, 23 factors entered into the stepwise multiple regression equation. These 23 factors accounted for 31.3% of the variance in choice of college (see Table 1).

Further analysis of the variables entered into the regression equation indicated that community/junior college students differed from other college students in that community/junior college students:

- expected to attain lower levels of post-secondary education,
- expected to live closer to home when attending college,
- expected to attend a college with a smaller student enrollment,
- expected to have a lower first year college grade point average,
- consisted of more Caucasian-American/White students,

- came from smaller communities,
- consisted of more part time students,
- planned to live at home more,
- were not as interested in participating in fraternities or sororities,
- had fewer years of high school mathematics,
- had more years of high school English,
- participated more in honors or advanced English in high school,
- were not as interested in the arts,
- believed more that the location of the college was important in college choice,
- preferred a college with a lower tuition,
- were not as interested in ROTC,
- had fewer years of high school natural sciences,
- had lower overall high school grade point averages,
- believed that factors other than the ones listed in the registration document were not as important in college choice,
- did not participate as much in high school work study programs,
- consisted of more females,
- were older students, and
- preferred more colleges that were either all male or all female.

CONCLUSIONS

As expected (Cohen & Brawer, 1982), the students who selected community/junior colleges were generally lower achievers. One distinction that the data indicated was that the community/junior college students had more English and honors English courses. The students were also interested in staying close to home, as noted by Smith (1990), and attending smaller colleges with lower tuitions than other students. Women were interested in attending community or junior colleges. This supports research by Cohen and Brawer (1982) as well as Rountree and Lambert (1992). This population of Mississippi students indicated that community/junior college students were not as interested in fraternities or sororities as other students.

IMPLICATIONS

When recruiting students for the community/junior college, several factors are important. First, students intending to attend community/junior colleges expected to attain a lower level of post-secondary education, expected to attend a college with a lower enrollment, and preferred a college with a lower tuition. These variables should be of particular importance to community/junior college recruiters since most community/junior colleges have lower enrollments than universities, have as a primary aim the goal of a quality education at a low cost, and offer as their highest degree the Associates of Arts. As a result, community/junior colleges are suited to meet these educational expectations. Secondly, because students intending

to attend community/junior colleges had more years of high school English and participated more in honors or advanced English in high school, recruiters should encourage high school English teachers to promote the community/junior college and use the high school English classroom as a place for recruitment. Recruiters could also target females and older students since the population of those who planned to attend community/junior colleges was made up of more females and older students. Finally, future research should seek to determine if students want to attend community/ junior colleges because they feel that the course work is easier.

Table 1.
Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis of Factors Concerning the Choice of College (Community/Junior or Other)

Question	Beta	T	Sig. of T
Expected level of education	.194	16.206	.000
Distance from home	.144	12.397	.000
Student body preference	.151	12.912	.000
Estimated college GPA	.040	2.540	.011
Race	-.095	-8.341	.000
Community size	.091	8.033	.000
Full time/part time plans	-.080	-7.146	.000
Residence plans	-.085	-7.447	.000
Interest in frat./soro.	-.078	-6.910	.000
Years in H.S. mathematics	.086	6.080	.000
Years in H.S. English	-.074	-5.783	.000
In H.S. honors English	-.048	-4.108	.000
Interest inventory - arts	.044	4.015	.000
Importance of location	.048	4.316	.000
Tuition cost	.044	3.798	.000
Interest in ROTC	-.035	-3.084	.002
Years in H.S. nat. sciences	.034	3.074	.002
Overall H.S. GPA	.063	3.947	.000
Importance of other factors	-.039	-3.453	.001
In H.S. work study	-.039	-3.535	.000
Gender	-.037	-3.237	.001
H.S. grade classification	-.032	-2.911	.004
College gender type	-.031	-2.774	.006

$F(23, 5,871) = 116.375$ Multiple R = .5596

BIBLIOGRAPHY

American College Testing Program. (1991). Registering for the ACT assessment. Iowa City, IA: ACT Registration Department.

American Psychiatric Association. (1983). Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (3rd ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Bers, T. H., & Smith, K. (1987). College choice and the nontraditional student. Community College Review, 15(1), 39-45.

Chapman, D. W. (1981). A model of student college choice. Journal of Higher Education, 52, 490-505.

Cohen, A. M., & Brawer, F. B. (1982). The American community college. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 213 469)

Hair, J. F., Anderson, R. E., & Tatham, R. L. (1987). Multivariate data analysis (2nd ed.). New York: Macmillan.

Howell, D. C. (1987). Statistical methods for psychology (2nd ed.). Boston: Duxbury Press.

Hughes, J. A., & Graham, S. W. (1992). Academic performance and background characteristics among community college transfer students. Community/Junior College Quarterly, 16, 35-46.

Maxwell, W. E. (1992). Academic quality and the choice of suburban community colleges by city students. Community/Junior College Quarterly, 16, 239-250.

Murphy, P. E. (1980). Consumer buying roles in college choice: Parents' and students' perceptions. College and University, 56, 140-150.

Norusis, M. J. (1988a). SPSS/PC+ version 2.0 advanced statistics for the IBM PC/XT/AT and PS/2. Chicago: SPSS Inc.

Norusis, M. J. (1988b). SPSS/PC+ version 2.0 base manual for the IBM PC/XT/AT and PS/2. Chicago: SPSS Inc.

Pedhazur, E. J. (1982). Multiple regression in behavioral research (2nd ed.). Fort Worth, TX: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.

Rountree, J, & Lambert, J. (1992). Participation in higher education among adult women. Community/Junior College Quarterly, 16, 85-94.

Smith, K. (1990). A comparison of the college decisions of two-year and four-year college students. College and University, 55, 109-125.

Smith, K., & Bers, T. H. (1989). Parents and the college choice decisions of community college students. College and University, 54, 335-348.

Willett, L. H. (1989). Are two-year college students first-generation college students? Community College Review, 17(2), 48-52.